



How to Increase
Organic Traffic
to Your Financial
Institution's Website
with Inbound

SmartBug.

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Introduction

With the average consumer spending more than six and a half hours online each day, it is more important than ever for your brand to be discoverable online. Simply having an updated website is no longer enough; companies can only attract new visitors if they are actively creating new content around the topics that matter to their current and potential customers. When marketers talk about increasing organic traffic, they are talking about attracting more website visitors who have come across your site after typing a question or term into a search engine such as Google.



Growing your organic traffic is labor-intensive to start, but it's extremely worthwhile once you get going. Part of what makes it so labor-intensive is that increasing organic traffic requires regularly publishing new, high-quality content around multiple core topics. If you are not creating new content, you'll have a difficult time generating growth in organic traffic.

The impact of great content is no secret, and yet many organizations hesitate to invest in and prioritize inbound marketing. According to Brandpoint, the No. 1 challenge among financial marketers is that they lack adequate resources to generate the quality content that is needed to improve search engine rankings and boost organic traffic. If that situation is all too familiar, read on to learn how you can implement a sustainable inbound marketing strategy that will amplify your content efforts and take your organic search traffic to new levels.

What Is Organic Traffic and Why Does It Matter?

Organic traffic refers to visitors who find your website after typing a phrase or question into a search engine and clicking one of your links that appears in the search results. If you're seeing high levels of organic traffic, this indicates that your website is being found by a significant number of people who are searching for relevant topics on Google. Not only that, but these visitors also tend to be more qualified, and the traffic is essentially free.

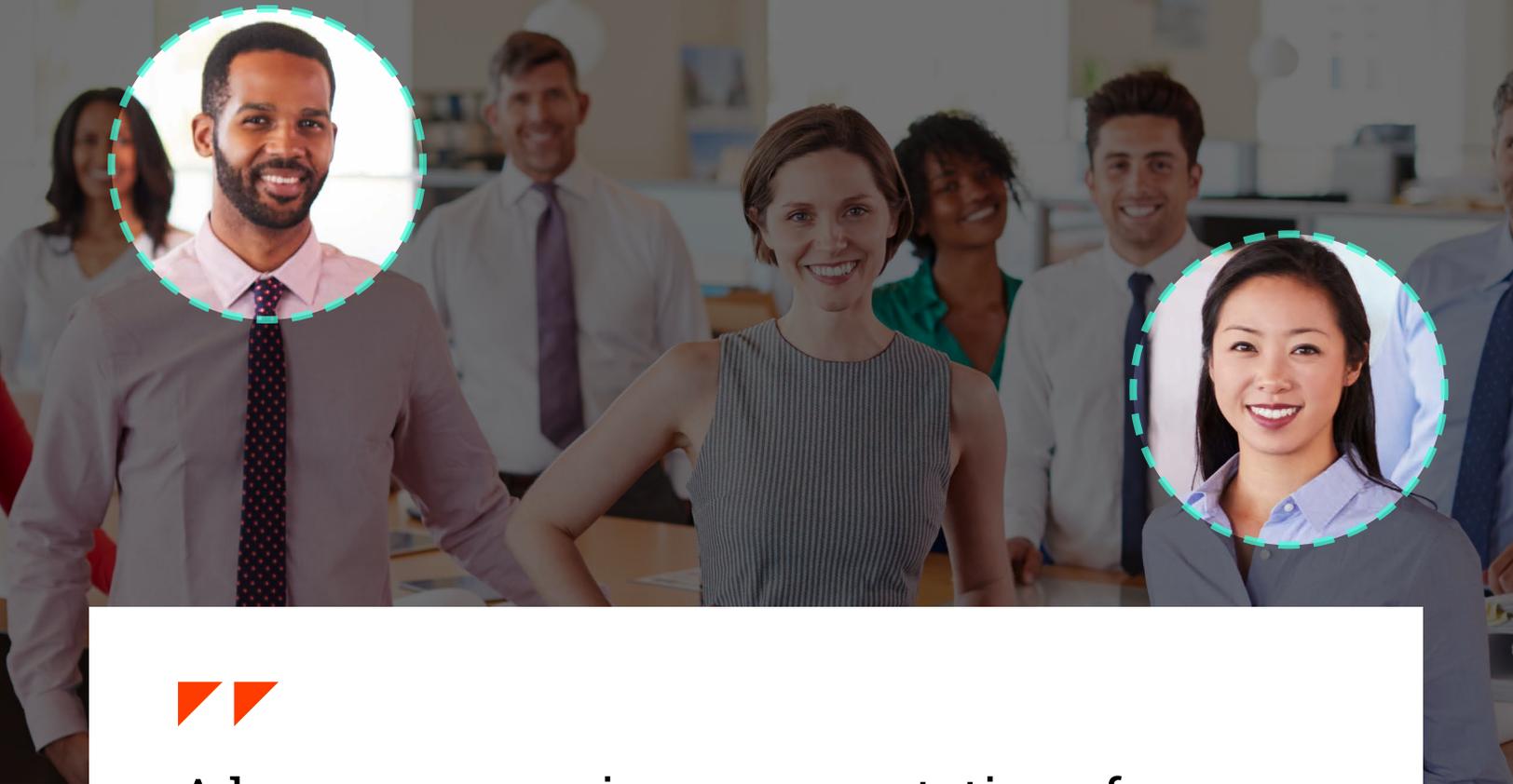
Focusing on organic traffic will help you build your total website traffic *and* help you stay on budget. And if you grow your organic traffic through inbound marketing, you can organically attract—and ultimately convert—the potential customers you seek.

Setting Your Financial Institution up for Success

When it comes to growing website traffic, remember that simply going after *more* visitors isn't the goal. The only productive approach is to focus on attracting the *right* visitors. But how do you know exactly who those visitors are and how to connect with them? The answer lies in identifying your buyer personas, creating a keyword strategy, and optimizing your website.

Developing Buyer Personas

One of the principles of inbound marketing is that it's always better to create content for people, not search engines. Thus, before you embark on a content strategy, you need to understand your buyer personas and the problems you're trying to help them solve.



A buyer persona is a representation of your target customer. It's a picture you paint based on research and interviews with actual customers. It goes beyond basic demographics to include the intangible elements that make a person tick. Persona development is paramount for the success of an inbound marketing program, no matter the size or scope of your business.

Only after doing the work to [establish a clear set of buyer personas](#) can you make informed decisions about which topics to cover in your content.

At the heart of inbound marketing is this principle: The more relevant, helpful, and valuable your content is in the eyes of your audience, the more impactful your campaigns will be. This is because a blog post that answers an important question that is commonly searched by a certain persona is more likely to be found by other readers through organic search, and your organic traffic will increase. On top of that, if your article is useful and well-written, readers are likely to share it within their circle of friends or colleagues, which helps build trust and brand awareness.

Thinking in terms of buyer personas is a great way to conceptualize and organize your content because it ensures that you are putting your audience first. When in doubt, ask yourself the following questions:

- “How does this piece of content help this buyer persona?”
- “If I were in their shoes, would I find this helpful, or would I be looking for something [different/better/simpler/more useful]?”

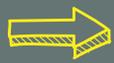
If you aren't confident in the quality or relevance of a piece, adjust the direction of the piece so that it definitively answers a question or speaks to a topic that matters to the target persona.

Understanding Topics and Keywords

Now that you have your buyer personas, the next step is to determine which topics to cover that will help address their pain points.

Here is one way we recommend approaching keyword research:

1. Create a list of the top 5-10 topics that relate to your business and your customers' needs and interests.
2. For each topic, identify a list of key phrases that fall under that subject. These phrases, or keywords, are what you will strive to rank for in search results.
3. Conduct research on each keyword to see how popular it is (how often it is searched) and how difficult it is to rank for. Check to see which sites or competitors are ranking for that keyword.
4. Validate and expand on these keywords with other related terms. Search engines are advanced enough today to connect related ideas even if searchers don't use the same term, so add some variation to the keywords within each topic.
5. Ensure you have a mix of short keywords and long-tail keywords. Short keywords (e.g., "checking account") tend to be searched more frequently and are thus harder to rank for than long-tail keywords (e.g., "best checking account for students").



Long-tail keywords: keywords, or keyword phrases, that consist of three or more words and target a more specific topic than broad keywords.

Don't feel like you have to go after every topic and keyword at once. You'll have more success if you focus on a few key topics that matter to your audience and expand from there.

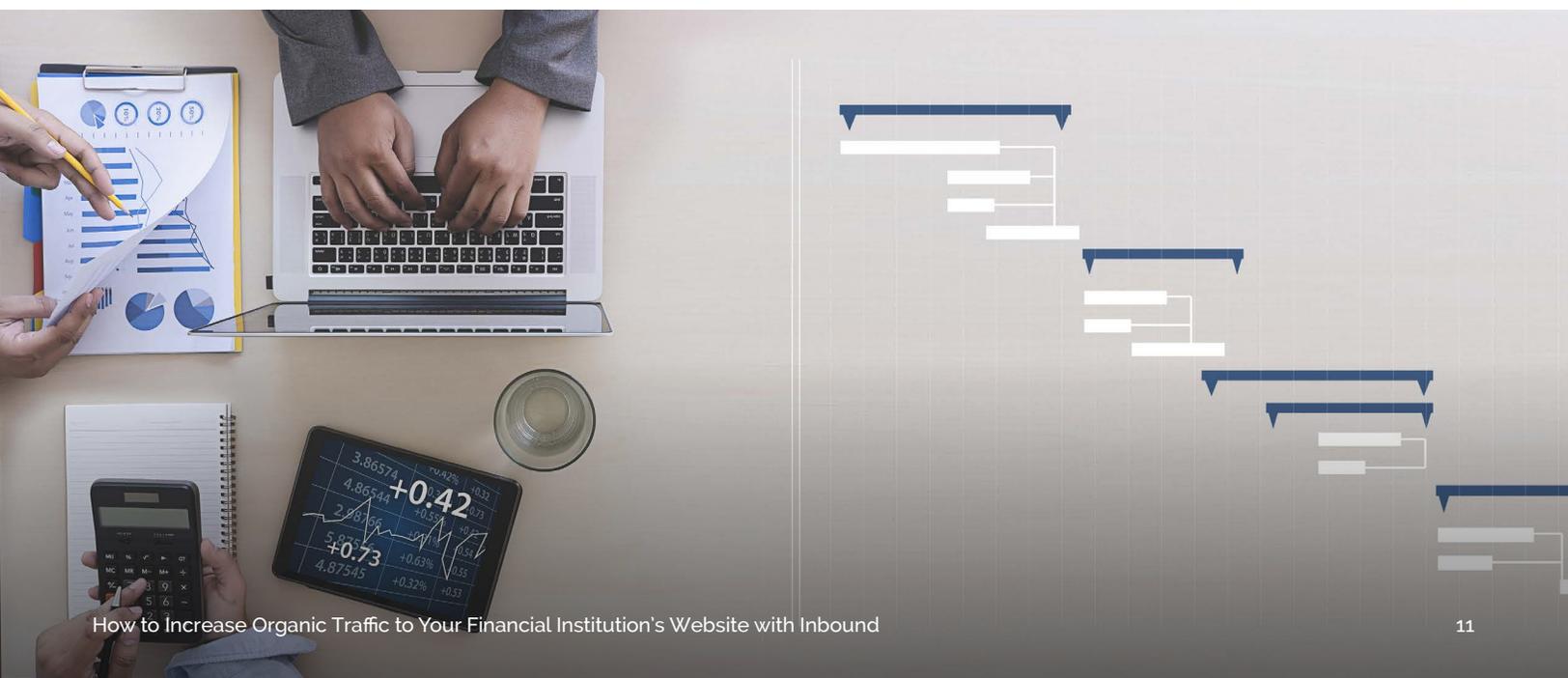
Now that you have your topics and keywords, you can start to create focused and engaging content on your website and blog. Remember that keyword research isn't a one-time exercise, so make sure to dedicate time to evaluating your keyword and topic strategy at least once per quarter. You'll also want to keep a close eye on your competitors to see which keywords they are vying for and how well their content is performing. Though you might want to write on some of the same topics, you may also discover relevant keywords that your competitors have neglected to write about. By stepping into that gap, you can attract more organic visitors and become a trusted resource for that topic.

Optimizing Your Website with SEO

It's important to have great content, but if your website pages aren't set up correctly, search engines won't be able to read that content to understand what your site is about. Taking the time to ensure that your pages have the right structure can have a huge impact on your site's visibility in search engine results. The process of editing the structure and format of your content is referred to as on-page search engine optimization (SEO). If you already have a wealth of content on your site but your organic traffic is low, you may want to investigate how you can improve your on-page SEO in order to help search engines better understand your content.



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Tips for Improving On-Page SEO:

On-page SEO can have a substantial impact on your page's ability to rank organically. And although [keyword strategy](#) and placement do have an impact, there are other important on-page factors. According to [Moz](#), these are the biggest on-page factors that affect search engine rankings:

Page Content

The content of a page is ultimately what makes it worthy of being ranked well in Google and helps bring organic traffic to your site. When evaluating the page content you've put together, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the quality of our content stand out in comparison to our peers' content?
- Would people who see this content feel that it fulfills their need enough that they don't have to go back and choose a different result?
- Does this content provide value and answer the questions our personas are asking, or is this content more about self-promotion?
- Does our content serve our personas' needs?
- Do visitors stay on our page to read the information we are providing?
- Are we providing a variety of content formats, including [video](#)?

Title Tags

Title tags are one of the most important on-page factors for SEO, along with content. Title tags are critical for helping search engines understand what your page is about, and they are the first impression many people have of your page.

Tip: Google typically displays the first 50-60 characters of a title tag. If you keep your titles under 60 characters, [leading research suggests](#) that you can expect about 90 percent of your titles to display properly.

Image Alt Text

Alt text is designed to help people and search engines understand what an image is about without needing to see it. The best approach for alt text is to be as descriptive as possible, while keeping the text within 125 characters.

Additional Ways to Improve On-Page SEO:

- Pick one target keyword for every site page (excluding the homepage; you can use more keywords there).
- Start at the top of your browser and work your way down. Is the target keyword in the page title? URL? H1 title? Used several times in the text?
- Make sure content is relevant to the keyword and reads normally. You should not stuff keywords into the text.
- Add meta descriptions for each page.
- Ensure you include internal links (links that connect your website's pages) on each page.



Increasing Organic Traffic for Your Financial Institution: The Power of Inbound Marketing

Building a Content Marketing Strategy

Content is the most powerful tool in your inbound arsenal. Not only does content have the power to drive awareness, generate leads, and establish trust, but it also has the potential to significantly increase organic traffic for your financial institution.

There are a variety of channels you can include in your content marketing strategy that work together to attract—and convert—organic website visitors. Here are the strategies you need to be thinking about:

Blogging

Blogging is one of the most effective ways to drive organic traffic to your website and obtain more monthly leads. In fact, according to [HubSpot](#), companies that blog 11 or more times per month see three times more traffic and four times as many leads as companies that blog 4-5 times per month. Blogging can also help financial institutions accomplish the below:

- Answer questions their personas are asking in an easy-to-digest format
- Establish thought leadership and brand awareness
- Generate inbound links to drive more traffic and conversions
- Humanize your financial institution and build trust

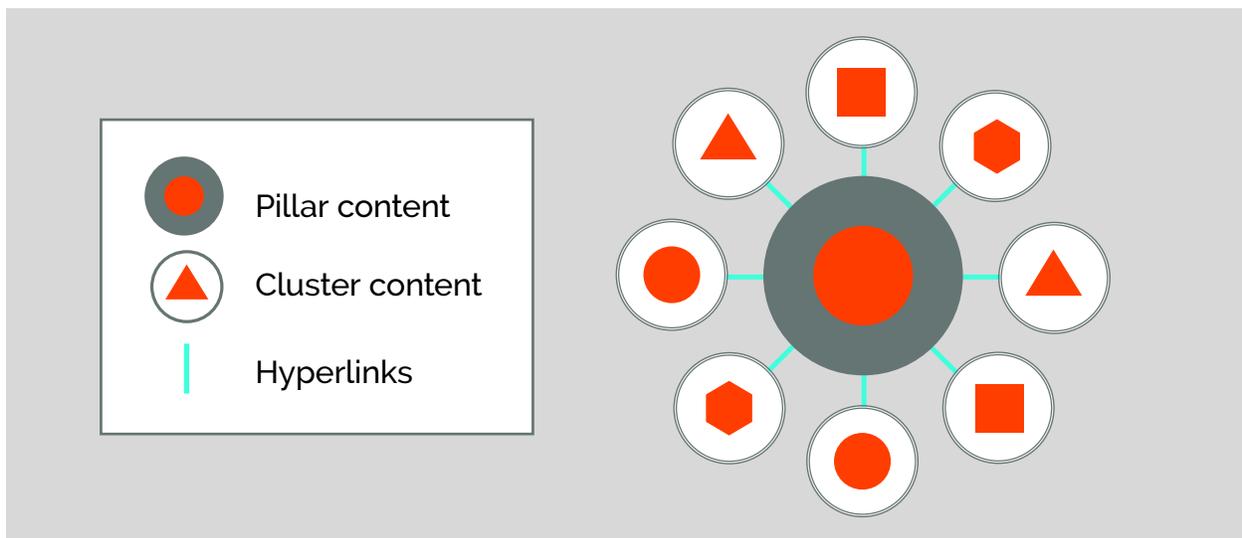
Premium Content

Premium content offers are long-form pieces of content that are often gated by a landing page and require prospects to fill out a form in exchange for the content. This content is often more in-depth and offers more “meat” than your typical blog post. Common types of premium content include:

- E-books or guides
- White papers
- Case studies
- Spec sheets
- Product guides
- Comparison guides
- Research papers
- Webinars
- Checklists

Pillar Pages and Topic Clusters

Long-form content pages that cover one specific topic are often referred to as “pillar pages.” Pillar pages act as magnets for organic traffic because they cover a core topic in greater detail than a typical website page or blog post. Instead of briefly touching on a topic or keyword, pillar pages are designed to fully answer related questions that users are typing into Google. Topic clusters, therefore, are really the individual topics that make up pillar pages. Here is an illustration to help:



To make things simple, think of a pillar page as a book and topic clusters as the chapters within it. Although there may be multiple chapters that cover different topics, they are all bound together by a cover and overarching title that connects each chapter together. Your content is no different—it just happens to be digital. In fact, your website probably already has the topic clusters (chapters) it needs to make up a pillar page (book); you just haven't grouped and/or linked them together yet.



Note: Pillar pages are ungated, meaning visitors don't have to fill out a form to access the content, which helps build trust by demonstrating that your organization is not just an expert on the subject, but also helpful, reliable, and customer-centric.

Transcribing Visual Content

It is estimated that by 2022, 82 percent of all internet traffic will be video content. And although video can help financial institutions humanize the customer experience, search engines are not able to watch video—which is why transcription is so important. Transcripts are textual representations of the words spoken in rich media and/or audio files. These include things such as videos, webinars, and podcasts.

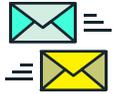
Transcribing visual and audio content will help ensure this content is crawled by search engines, which helps not only to improve your ranking, but also to drive more organic traffic to your site.

The Role of Other Traffic Sources in Increasing Organic Traffic



Referrals

Referral traffic will show you how many visitors landed on your site after clicking a link on a website other than a major search engine. For instance, if your financial institution earned some great media coverage from a top news outlet, readers might navigate to your site by clicking a link within the article. Links to your content from other websites are called backlinks. Backlinks from highly regarded websites indicate to search engines that your content is relevant, trustworthy, and informative, which improves the likelihood of your content appearing in organic search.



Email

Traffic from email marketing that has been properly tagged with an email parameter will show the total number of people who have visited your site after clicking a link in one of your emails. Email traffic won't directly influence organic traffic, but it can help increase engagement by directing people to content on your website and social channels and encouraging them to leave comments or share posts with friends. The more visits and engagement your content receives, the better it will perform in search results, which helps more people find your website through organic search.



Paid Sources

Paid search traffic comes from visitors who click on a sponsored link that a business has paid for via Google Ads or another platform in order to appear at the top of the search results. Although paid traffic does not directly influence organic traffic, paid links help with brand exposure and can influence a searcher to click on one of your organic search results. In addition, paid ads can lead to more shares, mentions, and links to your website, particularly on social media, which can boost your organic ranking and generate more organic searches as more people become aware of your brand's content.

Measuring Success: The Metrics That Matter Most



Organic Traffic Visits

One key metric in measuring success is organic traffic, but more specifically, the increase of traffic over time. If you've developed the right content for your target personas through an effective content strategy, then you should see an increase over time as more visitors find your content through organic search.



Leads

Leads are visitors who have taken a designated action on your website, such as filling out a form. Let's say you published a blog on home loans and the featured call to action (CTA) on the blog was for a guide for first-time home buyers. If the visitor clicks on the CTA and fills out the form to download the guide, they become a lead. Although there are a few more stages to becoming a customer, a lead is one step closer than a visitor.



Visitor-to-Lead (VTL)

Realistically, only a portion of your total website visitors will fill out a form and become a lead. How do you know what that percentage should be? Conversion rates can vary considerably depending on your industry, the size of your website, and your site's appearance in search engine results. However, based on industry benchmarks, financial services institutions should be converting approximately 16 percent of organic traffic into leads.



Subscribers

A subscriber is a contact who signs up to get your content delivered straight to their email. Your subscriber count will indicate how effectively your content is mapped to your buyer personas' questions, needs, and interests. The goal with subscribers is to provide them with the right content that will engage them and convert them into leads.





Conclusion

Increasing your organic traffic is one of the primary objectives of any inbound marketing strategy. Brands that consistently publish relevant, high-quality content that is optimized for search will see a steady increase in organic search traffic from better-qualified visitors.

If your financial institution's marketing strategy isn't paving the road for organic growth, it's time to get on board with inbound marketing. As one of the most effective ways to boost organic traffic, it can help [scale your business](#) in more ways than one. The most obvious? More organic traffic means more conversion opportunities.

Have a question? Curious how we can help grow your business?

Get the conversation started and let's talk about your organization, your goals, and how SmartBug™ can help you achieve them.

Let's Talk

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